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# United States Senate

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Lieutenant General Carl A. Strock  
Commander and Chief of Engineers,  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20314

Dear General Strock:

I am writing in response to a recent public meeting the Army Corps of Engineers had in Bismarck, North Dakota to discuss its plan to create artificial nesting habitat for the piping plover and the least tern. According to the Corps, its goal is to increase the volume of sandbars in the river from 12.5 acres to 50 acres per mile by building new sandbars and clearing vegetation from the current sandbars.

As you know, more than 150 people attended this meeting to ask questions and voice their concerns, many of which were met with typical Corps answers. I am still trying to understand this proposal and would like the Corps to tell me the total cost of building these sandbars and where this funding would come from, the future cost of maintaining the sandbars, and the cost per bird and per nesting habitat.

Additionally, I want to know the total yearly amount spent to maintain navigation on the river, including the Congressional add-ons for dredging, low water boat ramps, etc.

It is my understanding that the proposal to build these sandbars was developed as a result of the 2003 Amended Biological Opinion (BiOp) and the alternative is to have a spring rise as outlined in the 2000 BiOp. According to the Corps, these are the only two alternatives available for protecting these birds.

Let me suggest a third alternative I believe the Corps should consider. Take all the money the Corps spends to support navigation, add the funds the Corps has to spend to help communities cope with the low lake levels, and buy-out the downstream navigational interests. I believe this common-sense alternative will have much more benefit than what the Corps is currently proposing and will enhance all other authorized purposes, including those in downstream states.

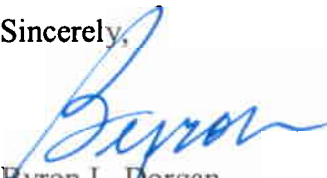
Eliminating navigation and reducing the need to increase flows during the spring and summer will increase the overall social, economic and environmental benefits for everyone on the river. Lower flows during this time period will eliminate the necessity to

build additional sandbars because the threat of the nesting habitat being washed away decreases dramatically. Additionally, conserving water in the upper three reservoirs that would typically be used to support navigation will ensure there is enough water available for other authorized purposes, including downstream industrial and municipal uses. Eliminating navigation will also reduce the uncertainty that downstream navigational interests face on a yearly basis and allow them to relocate their businesses to more appropriate places.

I understand the Corps' desire to address the endangered species on the river, but it should be done in a realistic, cost-effective and common-sense manner.

I look forward to working with you on this issue and look forward to your response to my questions and the feasibility of implementing my idea.

Sincerely,



Byron L. Dorgan  
U.S. Senator

BLD:ts